

## Honzon Mondo Sho

### A Summary of Questions and Answers Concerning the Object of Worship

#### Saint Nichiren's Answers to Questions Concerning the Gohonzon

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**Question:** In this age of degeneration of the Dharma (Mappo Period), which object of worship should one select?

**Answer:** The Odaimoku of the Lotus Sutra (Hokekyo) should be the object of worship.

**Question:** What part of the Lotus Sutra and whose interpretation is it based on?

**Answer:** Chapter X 'Preachers of the Dharma' of the Lotus Sutra states: "Medicine King! Erect a stupa of the seven treasures in any place where this sutra is expounded, read, recited or copied or in any place where a copy of this sutra exists! The stupa should be tall, spacious and adorned. You need not enshrine my ashes in the stupa. Why not? It is because it will contain my perfect body."

Chapter 'The Nature of Tathagata' of the Nirvana Sutra (Nehangyo) explains: "Kasho! The teacher of buddhas is Dharma. Buddhas therefore profoundly revere and venerate the Dharma. Since the Dharma is eternal, all buddhas are eternal".

Tendai-daishi's (Grand Master T'ien-t'ai) document, '-Penitence for One's Sins by Meditation on the Truth Expounded in the Lotus Sutra (Hokke-zanmai Zengi)-' states: "Establish a respectable altar in the temple and enshrine the Lotus Sutra there. There is no need to display figures of buddhas or any other sutras or enshrine Shakyamuni Buddha's ashes. Only the Lotus Sutra is necessary".

**Question:** Tendai-daishi's (Grand Master T'ien-t'ai) fascicle work Discourse on Mahayana Meditation and Contemplation (Makashikan) explains that the practitioner walks around a statue of Amida Buddha as the object of worship when practicing the second of 'the four kinds of concentrated meditation (Shishu-zanmai)'. Fukusanzo's translation of The Ritual Manual through Wisdom and Insight of the Lotus Sutra states: "Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha are the objects of worship. Why do you cast away their opinions and maintain that the Odaimoku of the Lotus Sutra is the object of worship?"

**Answer:** It is definitely not based on my own personal thinking. It is based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, mentioned earlier, and on Tendai-daishi's (Grand Master T'ien-t'ai) interpretation. As for the doubtful point that Amida Buddha is the object of worship when practicing 'the four kinds of concentrated meditation' according to '-Discourse on Mahayana Meditation and Contemplation-' it is because Amida Buddha is regarded as the object of worship only when practicing 'constant sitting meditation for a period of 90 days (Jozanmai)', 'constant active meditation for a period of 90 days', in which the practitioner walks around a statue of Amida Buddha while calling his name and remembering him (Jogyozanmai) and 'meditation on reality in an unspecified posture for an unspecified period of

times (Higyo-hiza-zanmai). These are the three of 'the four kinds of concentrated meditation' according to the Tendai School. This idea of the object of worship is based on the Saptasatika-prajnaparamitra-sutra (Monjumon-kyo), Hanju-zanmai-sutra and the Invocation of Avalokitesvara-bodhisattva-sutra. These types of sutras were in existence before the Lotus Sutra was preached, and they were teachings as an expedient means (Hoben) of leading sentient beings to the truth. 'In forty years and more, the truth has not been revealed yet' as is said in the Sutra of Innumerable Meaning. In a word, Shakyamuni Buddha did not reveal his true intention for more than forty years.

Moreover, there are two kinds of meditation in 'Hangyo-hanza-zanmai', one of 'Shishu-zanmai'. One is 'Hodo-zanmai (Vaipulya meditation)', which considers the seven buddhas and eight bodhisattvas as the object of worship. The second is 'Hokke-zanmai', which considers Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha of the Lotus Sutra as the object of worship. Judging from what 'Hokke-zanmai-Sengi' states, however, the truth is that the Lotus Sutra should be the object of worship. Although Fukusanzo's work -The Ritual Manual Through Wisdom and Insight of the Lotus Sutra- is based on the teaching of Chapter XI 'Apparition of the Jewelled Stupa' of the Lotus Sutra, it states that Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha are the objects of worship, but this is contrary to the real intention of the Lotus Sutra. As mentioned earlier, the Odaimoku is the Sacred Object that is worshipped by the buddhas from the ten directions as well as Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha. The true object of worship for the followers of the Lotus Sutra is thus the Odaimoku of the Lotus Sutra.

Question: There are ten Schools in Japan, such as Gusha, Jojitsu, Ritsu, Hosso, Sanron, Kegon, Shingon, Jyodo, Zen, and Hokke. The object of worship for these Schools varies. The object of worship in three schools of Hinayana (smaller vehicle) such as Gusha, Jojitsu, and Ritsu, is the Buddha of Inferior Manifestation (Retsu-Ojin). The object of worship in two schools Hosso and Sanron is the Buddha of Superior Manifestation (Sho-ojin). The Kegon School worships Birushana as their sacred object. Birushana is considered as a reward-body of Shakyamuni Buddha. The Object of worship in the Shingon School is Dainichi Nyorai and that of Jodo School is Amida Buddha. Zen School's object of worship is the Buddha who attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree namely the historical Shakyamuni Buddha. All of these schools and Schools display the icon of Buddha as their object of worship, but why is the Tendai School the only School that has the Lotus Sutra as their object of worship?

Answer: Other Schools display the statue of Buddha as their object of worship, but the Tendai School has their own significant reason for worshipping the Lotus Sutra as their sacred object.

Question: What is the significant reason? And which is superior to, Buddha or the sutra?

Answer: The most sublime object must be displayed as an object of worship. For example, the object of worship for Confucianism is the three Emperors and the five Kings. The object of worship for Buddhism should be Shakyamuni Buddha.

Question: If that is the case, why do you maintain that the object of worship is the Odaimoku rather than Shakyamuni Buddha?

Answer: As can be observed from the interpretation of the sutras mentioned earlier, it is not based on my personal, arbitrary opinion. Shakyamuni Buddha and Tendai-daishi (Grand Master T'ien-t'ai) held the Lotus Sutra as their object of worship. Although I appeared in this world after them, I, also, chose the Lotus Sutra as the object of worship. The Lotus Sutra is the parent of Shakyamuni Buddha and at the same time, the Lotus Sutra is the eyes of the other Buddhas. Shakyamuni Buddha, Dainichi Nyorai, and buddhas from the ten directions

were all born from the Lotus Sutra. So it is quite natural that their true parents should be considered as the object of worship.

**Question: What is the basis of your argument?**

Answer: The Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal-Virtue (Fugen Gyo) as the closing sutra of the Lotus Sutra states: "These Great-Vehicle sutras are the Law-treasury of the Buddha, the eyes of the Buddha from all directions in the past, present, and future, and also the seed which produces the tathagatas in the past, present, and future." and "These sutras of Great Extent are the eyes of the Buddha. By means of the sutras the buddhas have perfected the five kinds of eyes. (1)

The three kinds of the Buddha's bodies grow out (of the sutras) of Great Extent. This is the seal of the great Law With which the ocean of nirvana is sealed. From such an ocean are born the three kinds of pure bodies of the Buddhas. These three kinds of the Buddha's bodies are the blessing-field for gods and men, and the supreme object of worship."

According to these sutras, Buddha is to be born (like a child being born) and the Lotus Sutra gives birth (like the mother who is delivering a baby). Buddha is the body and the Lotus Sutra is the soul. Therefore the Lotus Sutra is the only law that can instil the spirit of the Odaimoku into newly carved wooden icons of Buddha or paper scriptures. Holding a ceremony to instil the spirit of a deity into the object by finger signs and mantras (a syllable, or word or phrase which contains mystic truth), and venerating it is a terrible mistake.

**Question: What is the difference between having the Lotus Sutra and Dainichi Buddha as the object of worship? Which is superior?**

Answer: According to Kobo-daishi, Jikaku-daishi, and Chisho-daishi, Dainichi Buddha as the object of worship is superior to the Lotus Sutra as that.

**Question: Why is that?**

Answer: In 'the Ten Stages of Mind' (classification of various moral and religious states) of Hizo Hoyaku (a work in three fascicles) by Kobo-daishi, sutras are graded according to profundity of doctrine, the 1st being the lowest level and the 10th the highest. Thus the Lotus Sutra ranks as the 8th, the Kegon Sutra as the 9th and the Dainichi Sutra as the 10th. In an abridged edition of Kongocho-kyo (Vajrasekhara-sutra) and also an abridged edition of Soshitsuji-kyo (Susiddhikara-Sutra), Jikoku-daishi explains that the Lotus Sutra stands second to the Dainichi Sutra which stands first. The same is true of Chisho-Daishi's explanation.

**Question: What is your opinion on these arguments?**

Answer: According to the judgement made by Shakyamuni Buddha, Taho Buddha, and buddhas from the ten directions, the Lotus Sutra must be considered as the best of all sutras including those preached before the Lotus Sutra, the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings as its 'opening sutra', and the Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal-Virtue as its 'closing sutra'.

**Question: The Kings, vassals, people as well as priests of the Tendai and the Shingon Schools throughout Japan contend that Nichiren just can't compare with such great masters as Kobo, Jikaku and Chisho. What is your opinion?**

Answer: Let me outline my opinion, if you will. First of all, do you think that Kobo-daishi, Jikaku-daishi and Chisho-daishi excelled Shakyamuni Buddha Taho Buddha, and other Buddha from the ten directions? Secondly, all people of Japan from the present King down to people in general are the children of Shakyamuni Buddha. In the Nirvana Sutra which is said to be Shakyamuni Buddha's will, it is stated that what should be relied on and can be authenticated is the Dharma and not the great masters' interpretations, which are only

secondary. To say that the Lotus Sutra is the supreme sutra is literally in compliance with the Dharma. So, those and even horses and cattle that follow the kings, vassals, people and priests embracing the idea that Nichiren just can't compare with the three great masters, namely, Kobo, Jikaku and Chisho, are all attaching little importance to or looking down upon Shakyamuni Buddha.

**Question: Did Kobo-daishi read the Lotus Sutra?**

Answer: Undoubtedly Kobo-daishi read the Lotus Sutra as well as all other sutras. He, however, misinterpreted some of them. In order to decide which sutra is superior to, the Lotus Sutra or the Kegon Sutra or the Dainichi Sutra, and which doctrine is profound or superficial, Kobo-daishi read the passages of the Lotus Sutra and interpreted them as follows: "The Lotus Sutra is the true Dharma of all Buddha and should be rated as the lowest of all sutras" (it actually reads 'it is the highest of all'). He interpreted further: "Medicine King, there are many sutras which have been preached but the Lotus Sutra ranks the 3rd among them" (it actually reads 'it ranks the 1st among them'). Jikaku-daishi and Chisho-daishi also misinterpreted the Lotus Sutra by stating, 'it ranks the 2nd'. In comparison with other sutras, however, Shakyamuni Buddha, Taho Buddha and Dainichi Buddha all stated: "The Lotus Sutra is the most excellent sutra." (Chapter X 'The Preachers of the Dharma' of the Lotus Sutra), and "The Lotus Sutra is superior to all the other sutras." Chapter XIV 'Comfortable Conduct' of the Lotus Sutra). Such being the case, which would you choose as the basis for your object of worship. Would it be the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and the other buddhas from the ten directions or the teachings of the three masters, Jikaku, Chisho or Kobo? Do you want to yield to the opinions of the three Daishi and act contrary to the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and other buddhas from the ten directions, ignoring Nichiren's assertion?

**Question: Kobo-daishi is a native of Shiko Island. He was a disciple of Bishop Gonzo, a scholar and priest of the Iwabuchi Temple in Nara Prefecture. Kobo-daishi mastered six teachings including those of the Sanron school and Hosso school. In May, 804, Kobo-daishi, in obedience to Emperor Kanmu's order, travelled to China, and on instructions of Emperor Junso, he entered the Seiryoji Temple, where he studied the teachings of the Shingon from Master Keika. It is said that Master Keika was the 7th generation priest after Dainichi Buddha. Although priests changed, the teachings of the Shingon were passed on from generation to generation like pouring water into urn after urn. Although the urn may be different, the water which was passed on from Dainichi Buddha to Kongo-sattva, Ryumyo bodhisattva, Ryuchi bodhisattva, Kongochi-sanzo, Fuku-sanzo, Master Keika and to Kobo-daishi is the same. After completing his studies under Master Keika, Kobo-daishi crossed the vast expanse of waters and returned to Japan. Thereafter Kobo-daishi taught the teachings of the Shingon School to three Emperors, Heijo, Saga, and Junwa. On January 19, 823, Kobo-daishi was granted permission from the Emperor to build the Toji Temple in Kyoto and then he began to spread the teachings of the Shingon around the Kansai area, then to Central Japan, to the Islands of Kyushu, Shikoku, Iki and Tsushima, and eventually through out the whole country. It may be said that those who pilgrimaged in all parts of Japan, ringing a bell on a pole of the Shingon School were all, without exception, disciples of Kobo-daishi.**

Jikaku-daishi, a native of Shimotsuke (now Chiba Prefecture), and the third Head Priest of the Enrajuji temple, was a disciple of Bodhisattva Kochi who was a priest of the Onoji Temple in Shimotsuke. Bodhisattva Kochi studied Buddhism from Dochu a disciple of Ganjin, and subsequently received the direct transmission of the teaching from Saicho. After completing his studies, Bodhisattva Kochi preached the teachings of the Tendai Sect throughout the Kanto area.

In 803, Jikaku-daishi, at age 13, entered Mount Hiei, where he spent 15 years acquiring the knowledge of six religions including the Hosso School (the dharma characteristic School, a Mahayana School founded in China) and the Sanron School (the Sunlun School, a Mahayana School founded in China) and, in addition, the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and the doctrine of the Shingon School. (2)

In 821, Jikaku-daishi traveled to China, and during the reign of Emperor Esho of China he mastered the esoteric and exoteric teachings of the two Schools under the tutorship of several virtuous high priests of the Tendai School and the Shingon School, namely, Hozen, Genjo, Gishin, Hogetsu, Shuei and Shion. Jikaku-daishi spent 10 years in researching the teachings of the Shingon School. Jikaku-daishi became the 9th Head Priest of the Shingon School. After returning to Japan, Jikaku-daishi became one of Emperor Ninmei's teachers in 848. During the eras of Ninju and Saiko (851 - 857) he wrote two doctrines: The Kongo Sutra (the Diamond Peak Sutra) and the Soshitsuji-kyo Sutra (Sutra on the Act of Perfection). Jikaku-daishi founded the Soji-in temple (the Tendai School) in Mount Hiei and became its 3rd Head Priest. This is when preaching the doctrine of the Shingon began in the Tendai School. (3)

Chisho-daishi, a native of Sanuki (now Kagawa Prefecture, Shikoku Island), entered Mount Hiei in 828 at the age of 14, and became a disciple of Master Gishin, a disciple of Saicho who was a native of Sagami (now Kanagawa Prefecture). Chisho-daishi had also traveled to China with his master. In Japan Chisho-daishi studied the teachings of 6 schools including the Sanron and Hosso, in addition to the teachings of the Hokke-shu (the Lotus Sutra School) and the Shingon Sect from Master Gishin, Jikaku-daishi, Encho-daishi (the 2nd Head Priest of Mount Hiei and a disciple of Saicho) and Betto-daishi Kojo (a disciple of Saiho).

In 851, Chisho-Daishi went to China in obedience to Emperor Montoku's order. During the period of Chinese Emperor Senshu, Chisho-daishi studied the esoteric and exoteric teachings for 7 years under the tutorship of several Masters, for instance, Master Ryosho and others. In 859, he returned to Japan and became a teacher to Emperors Montoku and Seiwa. These three Masters, namely, Kobo-daishi, Jikaku-daishi and Chisho-daishi, were respected and worshiped by successive emperors and their subjects for the sake of this life and the future life as if these masters were the sun and the moon. For this reason, the common people, who had no knowledge of Buddhism, simply worshiped and believed in these three Daishi.

In the Nirvana Sutra (Nehangyo), Shakyamuni Buddha gave the following warning: "Rely on the Dharma and not on the comments of people". What caused them to confide in Kobo-daishi and two others, and not in Buddha Shakyamuni?

Answer: Let me explain how Buddhism spread during the period of 1000 years after Shakyamuni Buddha's death. For the first 500 years Hinayana (the smaller vehicle) Buddhism was promulgated and then Mahayana (the Great Vehicle) Buddhism spread for the next 500 years. Within this period of time controversies arose between Hinayana and Mahayana, Gon Teaching (Expedient teaching) and Jikkyo (True Teaching), but there was no clear distinction between the esoteric and exoteric teachings.

One thousand years after Shakyamuni Buddha's death, the Zobo Era (the period of the Semblance Dharma, one of the three periods after Buddha's death) began. In the 15th year of this period, Buddhism was first introduced into China. In the initial stages, there were controversies between Confucianism and Buddhism as to which religion was superior with no positive conclusion. In the meantime Buddhism gradually spreads which aroused controversies between Hinayanists and Mahayanists, and between Gonkyo and Jikkyo. But actually there were no great differences between them. 600 years after Buddhism was introduced into China and in the reign of Emperor Genso, three Masters, Zenui, Kongochi and Fuku, came from India and they founded the Shingon School. As a result, the Kegon

and Hokke Schools became extremely unpopular. From Emperors down to people in general, everybody was under the impression that the Shingon teaching and the Lotus Sutra were as different as light from darkness. In the reign of Emperor Tokuso, Myoraku-daishi came into being. Although Myoraku-daishi felt that the Lotus Sutra was superior to the Shingon School's sutra, he felt that there was no need to mention it, and consequently people were unable to know which School was superior, the Hokke School or the Shingon School.

Buddhism was first introduced from Korea into Japan during the reign of the 30th Emperor Kinmei. For 30 years or so after its introduction, controversies about the differences between Shintoism and Buddhism existed. Buddhism was initially spread throughout Japan by Prince Shotoku during the reign of the 34th Emperor, Shiko. High priests Ekan and Kanroku came to Japan from Korea and propagated the Sanron School. During Emperor Kotoku's reign, Priest Dosho travelled to China and he brought back the teachings of Zen to Japan. In Emperor Tenmu's period, Korean Priest Chiho introduced the Hosso School into Japan. Priest Zenmui introduced the Dainichi Sutra during the reign of the 44th Emperor Gensho. However, it failed to spread. During Emperor Shomu's reign, Great Master Shinsho and Bishop Roben introduced the Kegon School. During the 46th Emperor Koken's rule, Priest Ganjin introduced the Ritsu School (a School based on the Mahayana precepts) and the Lotus Sutra. However Priest Ganjin disregarded the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and only propagated the Ritsu School.

In July 804, Great Master Dengyo, on Emperor Kanmu's instruction, travelled to China, where he met Priest Dozui (Tao-sui) and Great Master Gyoman (Hsing-man)(both of whom were disciples of Great Master Myoraku). Under their supervision, Great Master Dengyo studied 'Meditation and Wisdom' of the Hokke-shu and also learned 'the rules of conduct for Bodhisattvas', which had been taught by Great Master Dozen, the founder of the Nanzan school of the Ritsu School in China. Great Master Dengyo also received esoteric initiation of the Shingon School from Priest Jungyo. After returning to Japan, Great Master Dengyo did not propagate the teachings of the Shingon School. Instead, he researched the teachings of the Dainichi Sutra and the Lotus Sutra to determine which sutra was superior because he felt that the Chinese scholars would not provide him with the answer. Great Master Dengyo came to the conclusion that the Dainichi Sutra of the Shingon School was inferior to the Lotus Sutra and also that some thought of the Tendai School was incorporated in -the Commentary on the Dainichi Sutra- (the Mahavairocana Sutra), in particular, by Ichigyō Ajari (I-hsing A-she-li). Probably because Great Master Kobo felt resentment at the fact that the Sutra of the Shingon School was held in contempt and partly because he wanted to retrieve its honor, he made a false statement to people that the Lotus Sutra was inferior not only to the Dainichi but also to the Kegon Sutras. If Great Masters Jikaku and Chiso did not place great importance on the teachings of the Shingon Sutra, and if Great Master Kobo had refrained from spreading it in Mount Hiei and at the Onjoji Temple. His mistaken judgement could have been prevented from spreading throughout Japan. Great Masters Jikaku and Chiso did not recognize the sutra of the Kegon School to be superior to the Lotus Sutra. However, they supported Great Master Kobo's claim that the Dainichi Sutra of the Shingon School was superior to the Lotus Sutra although they belonged to the Tendai School. Thus, without knowing it, they became the enemy of Great Master Dengyo who founded the Tendai School in Japan.

Since then there appeared many intelligent priests of high virtue in Japan but unfortunately they were far from being equal to these three Great Masters (Kobo, Jikaku and Chiso). For 400 years from that time to this day, Japanese people thus have decided that the Dainichi Sutra of the Shingon School is superior to the Lotus Sutra. This impression has prevailed for

400 years and still does in these days. Even if there were someone who feels the doctrine of the Lotus Sutra surpasses the sutra of the Tendai School, he could not admit it from fear of reprisals from the powerful and influential priests in Mount Hiei and the Ninnaji Temple. Even if by chance, should someone claim that the Lotus Sutra and the Sutra of the Shingon School are on the same level, he would be humiliated and ridiculed by the people of the Shingon School. They will counter the claim by stating, "it is an undeniable mistake", and will completely ignore it. For these reasons, all the temples in Japan that amount to hundreds of thousands became affiliates of the Shingon School. Even if there were a temple where the teachings of the Shingon School and the Lotus Sutra are being expounded, the former would be given precedence over the latter. No one will expound the teachings of the Lotus Sutra because all head priests of the temples in Japan as well as the head priest of Mount Hiei are members of the Shingon School. Since all the upper class people belong to the Shingon School, the lower class people who tend to follow in the footsteps of the upper class people, naturally bar none, have become followers of the Shingon Seot. The people of Japan may read with their lips that the Lotus Sutra is number one, but within their souls, it is ranked as the second or the third and they will express it as such by words and their bodies. No one will mention the Lotus Sutra as the supreme and treat it as such by speech, body, and thought. Only Great Master Tendai did so. It is hard to fathom that there are followers who will support the Lotus Sutra. Chapter 10 of the Lotus Sutra, titled "Preachers of the Dharma", states: "Many people hate it with jealousy even in my lifetime. Needless to say, more people will do so after my extinction". The Lotus Sutra became the enemy of the emperors and the people during the Mappo Period.

I am the son of a fisherman from the Nagasa Tojo District in the Province of Awa (Chiba Prefecture). In pursuit of religion and education, I entered the Kiyosumi Temple in my district at age 11. However, since the temple was not staffed with well-educated priests due to its remoteness, I made pilgrimages all over the nation and educated myself on various sutras of many religious denominations. Because of my immaturity it was a difficult task for me to fathom the origins, merits, and the theories of sutras of the various Schools.

From my researches I arrived at the following conclusion.

- a. The Gusha School is shallow in doctrine. They propagate the teachings of Hinayana (the smaller vehicle).
- b. The Jujitsu School. Its teaching in which the Mahayana doctrines and the Hinayana doctrines are mixed together has many faults.
- c. The Ritsu School initially taught the teachings of Hinayana (the smaller vehicle) and later expounded the teachings of the provisional Mahayana (the great vehicle). Now they think they are expounding the true Mahayana teachings.
- d. Another Ritsu School which was transmitted to Great Master Dengyo from Priest Dozui is not the same as the Ritsu School mentioned above.
- e. The Hosso School in the early stages was expounding superficial teachings of the Provisional Mahayana but it gradually improved, ranking with the true Mahayana teachings and resulted in overtaking such a great School as the Tendai seot based on the true Mahayana teachings.
- f. The Sanron School (which claims that the ultimate truth or reality is revealed through negation) is a School which belongs to the provisional Mahayana, but they are convinced that they are expounding the true Mahayana teachings.
- g. The Kegon School, even though it expounds the provisional Mahayana teachings, surpasses all the other religious Schools as it is like a person who substitutes for the Emperor or the Chief Advisor to the Emperor. But it proclaims the Lotus Sutra to be its enemy, and thus it is as if a retainer were rebelling against the Emperor.

h. The Jodo School (Pure Land School), one of the provisional Mahayana teachings, according to the shrewd priests Zendo and Honen, proclaimed that:

1) The common people will have difficulty in comprehending most sutras except 'The Triple Pure Land Sutras', namely, (a) the Muryoju Sutra (the Buddha of Infinite Life), (b) the Kanmuryoju Sutra (the Meditation on the Buddha of Infinite Life), and (a) the Amida Sutra.

2) The masses were highly capable of understanding Buddhism during the periods of Shobo (The True Dharma period) and Zobo (The Semblance Dharma period).

3) The people of the Mappo Period (the period of the last and decadent Dharma) are destined to be dull-witted and will have difficulty in understanding Buddhism. Therefore, the Nenbutsu (meditation on the Buddha of Jodo School) should be promulgated.

Although they failed to discriminate right teachings from wrong teachings, they were shameless enough to refute all sutras of other religions. The Jodo School abandoned all of Shakyamuni Buddha's life-time work and founded the Jodo School based on its popularity among the people. Figuratively speaking, it is praising the mind of foolish people and getting rid of real wise men.

i. The Zen School proclaims that there is a true law other than all the scriptures of Shakyamuni Buddha. Such foolish thinking is similar to discarding the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and respecting your own ideas. It is similar to killing one's parents and giving an important position to their son, or to killing one's master and taking over his position.

j. The Shingon School did not only distance itself from the truth but their voices were extremely unjust. They deeply hid their roots, so the shallow-brained ones could not detect them. They deceived the people for a long time. First of all, There is no Shingon School in India, but the Shingon School in Japan claims that it is there. Where is the proof? The Dainichi Sutra which is the cardinal sutra for the Shingon School came from abroad and has been here in Japan. In comparison with the Dainichi Sutra, the Lotus Sutra excels the Dainichi Sutra in seven points. Since the evidences are found in both sutras, I will not comment on them. The Shingon School claims that the Dainichi Sutra is superior to the Lotus sutra in two or three factors. However, that is an absurd and mistaken thought. For instance, it is likened to Ryuso, a low-level warrior of the Han race, who forced the King of the Shin to collect a horse when the Shin race was conquered, and it is also likened to Choko, another low-level warrior concocting a plot and ascending the Throne, and to Daiman, a Brahman (Indian priest), using the statue of Buddha Shakyamuni as a chair and sitting in it.

No one in China is aware of such incidents, and, although 400 years have passed since the introduction of the Shingon School into Japan, no one is suspicious of its teachings. Thus the standard of judgment on Buddhist teachings became haphazard and obscure, so few could make fair judgment on whether a Buddhist teaching was right or wrong which resulted in entanglements of internal politics, leading to the invasion of Japan by a foreign power in the end. Since I was the only person that was aware of this situation, I compiled important passages of Buddhist scriptures into a book called "Rissho-ankoku-ron" (To Establish Righteousness to Secure Peace for Our Country) in an attempt to save the nation and the religious law. I presented this book to Hojo Tokiyori, the leader of the Kamakura Bakufu, but, realizing that the dull-witted officials would not be able to comprehend it, I took it upon myself to explain it.

The 82nd Emperor Gotoba abdicated the throne and entered the Buddhist priesthood. The retired Emperor Gotoba captured and killed Ida Taro, the Governor of Kyoto on May 15, 1222 as the first step in an attempt to overthrow the Kamakura regime of Hojo Yoshitoki.

He then mobilized warriors from all over the country in order to annihilate Hojo's regime by force. On the contrary, he was defeated and eventually exiled to the Okinoshima Island (Shimane Prefecture). Of his two sons, Emperor Juntoku was sent to the Sado Island

(Niigata Prefecture), and the other, former Emperor Tsuchimikado was exiled to Awa (Kagawa Prefecture). And Gotoba's seven subordinates were all beheaded. Why did Gotoba lose the battle in such a manner? As a former Emperor, Gotoba should have been able to destroy Hojo Yoshitoki, a low-level official, like the hawk catching a pheasant or a cat capturing a rat, but it was just the opposite.

In the hope of taking revenge on the Kamakura feudalistic government, the Imperial Court's side concentrated on conducting a prayer rite headed by Bishop Jien who was a head priest of the Tendai, a head priest of the Shingon School, the head priest of the Ninnaji temple, the head priest of the Onjoji temple and with a large attendance of priests of high virtue from the 15 great temples of Nara. This rite was held from May 15 to June 14, based on the 15 esoteric methods or practice established as the Great Law of the Shingon by the Great Masters Kobo, Jikaku, and Chisho. In addition to this rite, another praying session based on the Shingon School's great esoteric prayer, which had been held on only three occasions in Japan, was held by an Imperial Prince Dojo the head priest of the Ninnaji temple from June 8 in the Hall for State Ceremonies (Shishinden). Although such praying sessions were held, the Kamakura Bakufu's forces attacked Kyoto on June 14 and captured the three ex-Emperors, who were exiled to various islands, and beheaded the seven subordinates. The Bakufu's soldiers set fire and burned up the Imperial Palace. That was not all. They captured Setaka (a male child), the Imperial Prince's beloved son, living in the Ninnaji temple and beheaded him, and killed his mother with many other people who believed in the teachings of the Shingon School.

The secret prayers of the Shingon School were as follows:

- 1) Ichiji Konrin Ho (One Syllable Golden Wheel). This divinity is worshipped to prevent poisoning, ward off evil spirits, and avert disasters.
- 2) Shitenno Ho (the Four Heavenly Kings).
- 3) Fudomyo Ho (The Fierce Spirit).
- 4) Dai Toku Ho (Great Virtue).
- 5) Tenporin Ho (Preaching the Wheel Of the Dharma).
- 6) Myoirin Ho (Wish-Fulfilling Wheel).
- 7) Aizen-O Ho (the ritual dedicated to Aizen Myo-O, the God of Love).
- 8) Butsugen Ho (the rite performed for the purpose of stopping calamities).
- 9) Rokuji Ho (the six character name of Amida Buddha).
- 10) Kongo Doji Ho (A deity in the form of a furious-looking boy depicted in the Matrix-store Realm Mandala).
- 11) Sonjoo Ho (the ritual dedicated to the August Star Ruler). This esoteric ritual, traditionally performed at the Onjoji, is dedicated to Myoken, the dedication of the Great Bear - hokuto shichisei - as a prayer for longevity and the elimination of calamities).
- 12) Taigen (the ritual performed at the Imperial Palace from the 8th to the 14th of the first month for the purpose of praying for the long life of the Emperor and the peace of the state).
- 13) Shugo Sutra.

And three others.

The purpose of these prayers is to curse the enemies of the state and the emperors; to take the lives of the enemies and send their spirits to the Pure Land of Mystic Glorification where Dainichi Buddha is. Those who performed this rite were 41 priests, including such high priests as the Tendai School's Archbishop, Jien of Mount Hiei, Bishop Shingon, an Imperial Prince Dojo who was head of the Ninnaji temple, and Bishop Ryoson of the Jojyuin temple, not to speak of approximately 300 priests who accompanied the high priests above mentioned. Although the prayers at the ritual and the priests offering these prayers as well as

the period during which the prayers were offered were all satisfactory, why in the world was the Imperial Court's side defeated in the battle Even if they had not won, why did they lose so quickly and bring disgrace upon themselves? No one knows. Since the Imperial Court's side tried to suppress its rebelling subjects, it is like a hawk catching a bird. Even though they were beaten, why could they not hold on for a year or two, or even ten to twenty years? On the contrary they just held on for a little more than 30 days, the affair beginning on May 15th and ending on June 14th. On the other hand, Hojo Yoshitoki in Kamakura had no knowledge of this affair in Kyoto at all, so he did not offer prayers and made no preparations for the battle.

I (Saint Nichiren) came to the conclusion, after re-examining the incident, that the Imperial Court's side had lost the war because they had prayed to the laws of the Shingon Seot which are wrong, false, and untrue. Even if it were only one person that offered a prayer to such an unreliable law, the prayer could cause such a disaster that even a nation should be ruined.- How much more so when the ruler prayed, in unison with 300 priests to the law of the Shingon School which considers the Lotus Sutra to be their biggest enemy? It was inevitable consequence that the Imperial Court's side was defeated. As years passed, the mistaken teachings of the Shingon School which had caused the catastrophe have gradually spread to the Kanto area, where priests of the Shingon, becoming administrators of large temples began to spread their false teachings. In this area, most people whose origins are boorish samurai have neither knowledge nor capability of realizing the difference between true teachings and false teachings, but they merely believe that the three treasures, namely the Buddha, the Law, and the Buddhist priests, should be respected. Thus they naively became followers of the Shingon School.

As time passed, the Kamakura area was again about to be invaded and destroyed by a foreign power because of the mistaken teachings of the Shingon School. The Kamakura Feudal Government not only had jurisdiction of the entire Kanto areas, but they also gained control of the Enryakuji Temple in Mount Hiei, the Toji Temple in Kyoto, the Onjoji Temple in Shiga Prefecture, and the 7 main temples in Nara, and consequently, the leader of the Kamakura Feudal Government with his family and all the Bishops and the Head Priests of those temples have become followers of the Shingon School just like the ex-Emperor Gotoba, who was exiled to the Oki Island, had been a follower of the Shingon School.

A ruler of a country, whether a country is large or small, is selected at the discretion of Bontenno (the King of the Brahma Heaven), Taishaku (a God who protects Buddhism and its followers), Nitten (the Heavenly Sun), Gatten (the Heavenly Moon), and Shitenno (the Four Heavenly Guardians). These Heavenly Beings have vowed to punish immediately anyone who is an enemy of the Lotus Sutra. For this reason, Taira no Kiyomori, the leader of the Heikes, had his grandson for the Eighty-first Emperor Antoku and then in order to subjugate Yoritomo the leader of the Minamotos, Kiyomori supported the Enryakuji temple in Mount Hiei as their guardian temple and also supported the Sanno shrine in Otsu City as their guardian shrine. His efforts were, however, far from being rewarded; the Emperor Antoku was drowned to death in the sea of Danno Ura, the channel between the Kyushu Island and the Mainland, and Bishop Myoun of the Enryakuji Temple was killed by Kiso (Minamoto) Yoshinaka, the commander in chief of an expeditionary force against the Heikes.

All the members of the Heikes were annihilated at once. The fall of the Heikes and the civil war of the Joku period are proof that belief in the false law of the Shingon School resulted in ruining oneself.

The rite held for praying down the Mongolians is the third incident. They had ignored my remonstrations not to engage in a rite to tame and subdue the Mongolians as devils or adversaries. Chapter XXV of the Lotus Sutra, 'The Universal Gate of World-Voice-Perceiver Bodhisattva', states: "and the injury will rebound upon the originator", which means that those who curse someone shall be cursed. From this standpoint, receiving punishment should be taken as Buddha's benefit or favour and thus there is no doubt that the Lotus Sutra is the only path leading to enlightenment. Minamoto Yoritomo was able to defeat the Heikes by the merits he accumulated through his daily practices of the Lotus Sutra. This is the manifest evidence that we are able to receive divine benefits in this world. Thanks to my parents and my teacher, all of whom are dead and gone now, I was able to understand this truth. My teacher, Master Dozen, being afraid of Tojo Kagenobu, the lord of a manor and a devotee of Amitbha, pretended to detest and despise me as if I were his enemy because I was propagating the Lotus Sutra~ although he felt pity for me in the recess of his heart. In time, through hearsay, I learned that Master Dozen began to believe in the Lotus Sutra, but whether he did so at the time of his death is unclear. It is very worrisome. Surely, he is not in Hell, but it is unimaginable that he has departed from the cycle of birth and death. It is extremely regrettable to think that he is wandering around the intermediate world between the present and future worlds. At the time Tojo Kagenobu was planning to kill me on April 28, 1254 (the day when our School was established on the basis of the original teaching by Saint Nichiren), you, Priest Joken (Saint Nichiren's senior disciple) and Priest Gijyo escorted me out of the Kiyosumi Temple. Although nothing happened, your action must be considered a good service to the Lotus Sutra, so, you and Priest Gijyo may be able to depart from the cycle of birth and death.

It has been approximately two thousand two hundred years since Shakyamuni Buddha preached, but not a single person in this world has spread this Gohonzon and the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. Great Master Tendai of China and Great Master Dengyo of Japan were aware of this Gohonzon, but they made no attempt to spread. In this period of Mappo, this Gohonzon should be spread. Although it is predicted in the Lotus Sutra that Primordial Bodhisattvas who appeared from Underground such as Jogyo Bodhisattva and Muhengyo Bodhisattva would appear in this world and propagate this Gohonzon, they have not appeared to date. I am well aware that I am not one of them, but I have been engaging in the activities of spreading the Lotus Sutra as their forerunner. And I have so far proved to be the aim of attack as was pointed out in the passage of Chapter X of the Lotus Sutra, 'Preachers of Dharma', predicting that those who would engage in the spreading of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra will, without fail, encounter cruel persecution. I would like to pray that these merits I have received through religious persecution would be transferred to my parents, my teacher, and all of the people in this world. This document is being written to clear your doubts and to advise you, Priest Joken, to disregard the religion of Shingon, Nenbutsu and others, and pray fervently only to the scripture of the Lotus Sutra for after life.

Signed,  
Saint Nichiren

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Reverend Fukuoka's Notes to the Translation:

1. Five Kinds of Eyes: 1. The eye of those who have a material body 2. The divine eye of celestial beings in the world of form 3. The eye of wisdom, by which the followers of

the two vehicles perceive the non-substantiality of things 4. The eye of the Law, by which the bodhisattvas perceive all teachings in order to lead human beings to enlightenment 5. The Buddha's eye, the four kinds of eyes enumerated above existing in the Buddha's body. (Quotations from: *The Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal-Virtue* Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1974) pp. 52, 67

2. The schools, mentioned above, refer to groups of people studying Buddhist philosophy during the Nara period.
3. From the period of Jikaku-daishi, the Tendai School began to adopt the teachings and practices of the Shingon School. It was therefore not odd for Jikaku-daishi to preach the doctrines of the Shingon in the Tendai School temple.